



Testimony of Carol Scully
Director of Advocacy, The Arc of Connecticut, Inc.
Appropriations Committee Budget Hearing
H.B. 6559 An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2025
Conservation and Development Department of Housing

February 27, 2023

Members of the Appropriations Committee: Co-Chair Senator Osten, Co-Chair Representative Walker, Vice Chair Senator Hartley, Vice Chair Representative Exum, Ranking Member Senator Berthel, Ranking Member Representative Nuccio and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

The Arc Connecticut is the oldest and the largest community-based organization advocating for and with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. We work tirelessly to uphold our vision that every individual and family living with I/DD has access to the information, advocacy, and skills they need to support their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.

We are a chapter of The Arc of The United States, which has 675 chapters in 49 states and over 5,000 service locations. Nationwide, we have approximately 7,000 board members, 124,000 staff, 46,000 volunteers and collectively we serve more than 1 million people with I/DD and their family members.

In Connecticut, our 14 Arc local chapters deliver over \$100 million in jobs, supports and services to thousands of people in 162 communities. Nonprofit providers including the Arcs are the largest provider of supports and services for people with I/DD and their families in the state, providing about 96% of the services.

The Arc of Connecticut supports the statewide Home Connecticut Campaign that advocates for increased funding for an additional \$72 million in both FY24 and FY25 to the Department of Housing/Homeless Services budget line to expand the general Rental Assistance Program (RAP) and the addition of \$5 million to the Department of Housing/Homeless Services for housing navigation services to assist voucher recipients with finding homes.

For people with disabilities, there are far too many barriers to housing. HUD describes chronically homeless as a person with a disability who for the last 12 months continuously. This subset of the homeless population has high service needs and disabilities and who, if not provided with intensive housing assistance and supportive services, would likely remain homeless. In a 2019 report, The Coalition to End Homelessness found 1,381 individual adults in emergency shelter, 129 were identified as chronically homeless (9%).

One of the The Arc CT 's priorities is to advocate for persons with disabilities to live their best lives independently in their communities. Unfortunately, CT's high cost of living makes it difficult for people with disabilities to afford housing, especially if they don't qualify for state waiver supports and or rely solely on Supplemental Social Security Income/Disability payments. Living as independently as possible

in the community are among the most important values and goals shared by people with disabilities especially persons with Intellectual, Developmental Disabilities (IDD), their families and advocates. A statewide housing crisis contributes to the barriers to housing. Without affordable, accessible housing in the 26 towns served by the foundation and across Connecticut, persons with IDD are at risk of institutionalization, living in a non-inclusive setting or homelessness. Group homes were created as institutions were being disbanded in Connecticut, most notably, Mansfield Training Center, and have not provided persons with IDD independent living as originally intended. Many people with IDD live with aging caregivers (age 60 and older). As this generation of caregivers age, many of their adult children with IDD may be at-risk of institutionalization or even homelessness.

Many persons with IDD have been on the waitlist for housing vouchers for a very long time. They grow discouraged by the lack of vouchers and the lack of landlords or housing programs that will accept housing vouchers.

For individuals with disabilities who use mobility devices, finding housing with even basic accessible features is daunting, if not nearly impossible and largely unaffordable. The availability of accessible, affordable housing places people with IDD at risk of being institutionalized or in "worst-case" housing options and possibly paying too much in rent to afford other basic necessities. Additionally, some persons with IDD/disabilities as a result of the lack of accessible, affordable housing, may be living in severely inadequate conditions. In May 2022, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported there are 613,853 adults in Connecticut have a disability. This equals 22% of adults in Connecticut with select functional deficits. The 2019 Case for Inclusion report compiled annually by the ANCOR Foundation and United Cerebral Palsy ranked Connecticut 31st in the nation in the effort to service people with IDD. The biggest factors affecting Connecticut's score include poor marks in two categories: promoting independence, where the state ranks 43rd, and serving those in need, where it ranks 46th. Persons with IDD have the right to live in accessible, affordable housing in the community.

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